The Institution of Engineers, Australia; Sydney Division
Engineering Heritage Committee

ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEWEE : Kevin Parsons

INTERVIEWER : Margo Beasley

TAPE NUMBERS :
IEA SYD: MB1
MB2
MB3

INTERVIEW DATE : 20/12/1999

NUMBER OF TAPES : 3

RESTRICTION ON USE : None

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INTERVIEW TAPE LOG

This interview took place at 9 Morna Place, Turramurra
on 20 December 1999

This interview is part of the Oral History Project of the Engineering Heritage Committee of the Sydney Division the Institution of Engineers, Australia.

Tape Log

Tape : IEA SYD : MB1, Side A		
COUNT	**SUBJECT**	**NAMES & KEYWORDS**
020	Biographical information	Wesley College
034	Parallel career of brother, father accountant	
050	Mother most interested, encouraged civil engineering	
063	Childhood interests, model planes, radio	
090	Influential teachers, broad school, prepared for life, prefect, cadet	
126	Did science-based subjects	
136	Matriculated, did engineering	University of Western Australia
140	UWA, post-war reconstruction, returned servicemen	
153	5 year engineering degree, unusual, one year in the field, majored in electrical engineering	
179	Appointed to PMG in Sydney, as technician	Post Master General's Department
192	Experimental radio systems, examining potential sites for VHF and UHF and microwave point to point links	VHF, UHF, Microwave
210	Great interest in radio communications	
225	VHF ground to air communication outlets	Dept Civil Aviation (DCA)
235	Efficiency of broad band radio	
240	Discussion of meaning and usefulness of VHF	VHF
282	Choice of electrical engineering over aeronautical engineering, and civil engineering	
333	Electrical engineering field expanding post-war	
357	Head hunted in final year at UWA by Dep't of Civil Aviation in WA, asked for Sydney	DCA
377	Airways engineer for DCA, disliked first job in recruiting and maintenance	
400	Moved into radio installation group, Sydney	Ground-air VHF Communications
412	Installations on mountains	
425	Use of wartime equipment, backbone of ground-air communications	SCR 522, BC 624, BC 625
463	Post-war aviation industry, equipment, crude communications, long flights, runways, reasons to improve	HF radio, DC3s
500	Setting up infrastructure, promotion and advancement	ILSs
515	DCA wide range of responsibilities, discussion	DCA
	End of Side A	

Tape :	IEA SYD : MB1 , Side B	
COUNT	**SUBJECT**	**NAMES & KEYWORDS**
005	New organizational structures originally from DCA, strong identity of DCA, great reputation, freedom	DCA
090	Relationship of regions with head office, Melbourne, which took major decisions. Positioning.	
156	1956, senior engineer, capital works, first autonomous command, commissioning, design and construction of electronic installations	NSW radio installation section
187	Transmitting station, rivalled Radio Australia. For Aeronautical Fixed Traffic Network for US, Singapore, Fiji etc and interstate links. Other uses. Controlled purely by radio systems. Discussion.	St Mary's, AFTN
260	Other projects in late 1950s. Instrument landing systems, flight service units, air traffic control towers, great burgeoning.	ILSs
287	National airways engineering coordinating system. Also work in Solomon Islands, PNG	
303	Politics of priorities and funds allocation. Jockeying for resources.	
361	1962 Superintending engineer.	PNG
365	Marriage, children.	
374	Departmental reshuffle in DCA, opportunity for PNG, sold house, shipped car and possessions to PNG. Family enjoyed it. PNG for seven years.	Port Morseby
416	Looked after every form of engineering in airports except civil engineering, maintenance, and electrical and mechanical engineering. Quite primitive. Poor communications	Medang, Lae, Wewac.
440	DC3s, oxygen problems, Owen Stanley Ranges, opportunities for communications systems on very high points, experiments.	
460	Radar coming in in Sydney, little in PNG.	Radar
465	Experimentation with difficult situations. Transistors changed entire philosophy of aviation and electronics. Could fabricate lightweight equipment for helicopters. Batteries allowed experimentation.	Transistors
497	Intuition with experimentation, imprecision, feasibility.	
519	Interaction with local people, little professionally. Cooperation with universities for work experience for PNG nationals. Contact with locals in the field.	
	End of Side B	

Tape Log

Tape : IEA SYD : MB2, Side A		
COUNT	**SUBJECT**	**NAMES & KEYWORDS**
O18	Locals planting crops to increase price for land use	
030	DCA activities brought commerce to local people, aviation improved communication	Lae, Goroka, Mt Hagen
168	DCA messes	
180	Used standard technology in PNG but a period of change everywhere. PNG didn't get much, but got state of the art.	
118	Parsons got closer to actual flying in PNG. Provided marine service, with flying boats, around coast and remote places. DCA provided mooring facilties.	Catalinas Port Morseby harbour
177	Lines of communication very slowly, required self-reliance and improvisation. Good training.	
200	Trouble with ILS parts. Improvising with what became standard modification developed out of necessity in PNG.	Transmitter localiser cabinets
245	Professionally interesting, interested in Institution of Engineers, competition from the Institution of Radio Engineers. Reasons for membership, promoted presence of IEA in PNG, professional program.	IEA, IRE
288	Port Morseby existed because of the engineers there: roads, water supply etc. Engineers' network, shared sites, interaction between departments in engineering in general.	Department of Works, Department of Post and Telegraphs, DCA
330	1970 return to Adelaide, reasons, personal and professional, wife's work in PNG, opportunities for expat women.	
385	Superintending engineer of South Australian-Northern Territory region.	
392	`Bird of Paradise' Club: explanation.	K M Barclay DFC
425	Same job as PNG but easier because of better communication and supply lines, more manageable, `civilized'.	
440	Reported to regional director; in charge of all engineering in the SA-NT region except civil engineering. Description.	
455	More maintenance than PNG	
465	Story about first Concorde flight and sonic boom. Problem of capturing boom on the data equipment.	Concorde
503	Long range weapons establishment, testing in air space, failed satellite attempt	Woomera, Gove
520	1973 Sydney Superintendent Engineer of NSW region, reasons	Ern Archibald
	End of Side A	

Tape :	IEA SYD : MB2 , Side B	
COUNT	**SUBJECT**	**NAMES & KEYWORDS**
006	Reluctance to leave Adelaide but Sydney best of civil aviation in Australia, more exciting	Wing Commander Doubleday
050	Challenges in NSW, especially level of activity in Sydney: lion's share of air traffic, airport development, navigation, new radars, air traffic services center.	
080	Obsolescence and renewal, e.g. radar systems superceded.	Radar
102	Immense pressure for better aircraft handling facilities in Sydney	
106	Extraction of management data for 700 people.	
125	Class 5 engineer	
135	Magnitude of task, obstacles, industrial pressures, difficult to get staff, training own technicians. Demarcation disputes between technicians in different unions, discussion	PREIA, ETU
182	Reasons for demarcation dispute over runway light switch. effects on Sydney Airport	
255	Technical officers dispute with Commonwealth Public Service Board over comparative wage justice. Long running strike. Former colleagues now on the other side of the fence. Inflationary pressures	Bob Hawke
298	Very little hands-on engineering, but perceived engineering solutions, radar at Sydney Airport. Description of Mode C radar	Radar, Mode C.
343	Beginning of replacing point to point communications with satellite –based systems	Satellite-based systems
358	Experimentation, replacement of ILS with MLS which can be put anywhere. Supporting role of DCA.	Microwave landing systems, Egon Stern, Dr Paul Wilde, Interscan, Brian O"Keefe
403	Liked admin, missed engineering a little, professional decisions.	
415	Concept of technical officer as opposed to technician, relationship to engineers. Sub-professional category. Compete with engineers for management jobs. Effect on engineers, less hands-on.	
478	Need for practical field work and to make decisions, to gain engineering experience	
498	Arrangements with Public Service Board, Treasury, Department of Supply, negotiating relationship.	PSB, Treasury, Supply
522	Association of Professional Engineers of Australia, changes in perceived worth of engineers, arbitration decision, PSB not happy.	
	End of Side B	

Tape Log

Tape : IEA SYD : MB3, Side A		
COUNT	**SUBJECT**	**NAMES & KEYWORDS**
013	Public Service Board, reorganization of classification of engineers, second division, high career point	
062	Senior Executive Service	
074	Whitlam Government, DCA to Department of Transport, further reorganization, opposed an engineering branch, believed DCA work aligned with air traffic controllers; airways branch of Department of Aviation established. Parsons: managerial duties.	
147	Management information systems, still working on paper files, too labour intensive; installed computer network data bases	
201	Became chairman of Regional Air Space users Advisory Committee, description of tasks, helicopter lanes, hang gliders, etc.	RAAF, Richmond
236	2 I/C of NSW region, also 12 months as acting regional director of the department: civil aviation, transport and aviation	
241	Department of Transport disbanded, too broad	Dept of Aviation
265	Department broken up into civil aviation and Federal Airports Corporation, Parsons retired	
281	Association of Professional Engineers diluted, combined with scientists and managers, laments fact that engineers aren't getting enough management opportunity	
320	Changes in the practice of the profession, too little engineering in-house, implications for specialist skills, rejects bottom line view of skills	
353	1986 retirement, consultancies, United Nations International Civil Aviation Organization, studied civil aviation organizations in Arab states; aviation facilities in Pakistan; audit on air traffic control in North Korea	ICAO
420	Environmental Impact Statement for 3rd runway, Sydney Airport. Solution to build on the airport itself, cater for wide-bodied aircraft, send light aircraft elsewhere.	EIS Dr Brian Jenkins
469	Environmental impact of runway, dredging, sand transport, Botany Bay, second stage management plan, description.	
492	Noise management plan for Sydney Airport, very political, costly, problems	
522	Howard Government: changes of operating rules of airport to include east-west runway, noise distribution changed.	
539	Breadth of engineering has changed, Parsons became civil engineering oriented	
	End of Side A	

Tape :	IEA SYD : MB3 , Side B	
COUNT	SUBJECT	NAMES & KEYWORDS
013	Changes in the profession, much wider, so many facets, formerly could practice in whatever area you wished, not today. Much more specialized.	
049	Public view of engineering muddied, hands-on nature has changed, prescriptive, little investment without obvious return	
077	Objects to removal of position of chief engineer in most organizations, reasons	
093	IEA should push for statutory registration, national register good as first step. Protect integrity of the profession.	
125	Childhood enthusiasm for ham radio, always impressed by home made devices in backyards gave contact with the world, developed interest in communications, has amateur radio license	
166	Effect of computers on ham radio, radio better for friendship, greater achievement	
	End of Side B	